

# De Mau Mau

*A factual account of  
racism in the white Press.*

The slander of 9 black men by 8 or more white reporters from Chicago papers began after a press conference Sunday October 15, 1972, headed by County Sheriff Richard Elrod, State's Attorney Edward Hanrahan and Chicago Police Supt. James Conlisk. It was announced there that the murder of the Paul Corbett family (4 killed) in Barrington Hills and the killing of one Micheal Gerchenson in Southern Illinois were linked through the same .30 caliber rifle (yet unfound); at the same time, reporters learned that a .25 caliber pistol (unfound) connected the triple killing of Stephen Hawtree and family with the murder of a G.I. William Richter. There was a single link connecting all 9 murders, and that was the confession of a single informant which came after police interrogation without counsel. The informant can only describe one of the murder scenes (the Corbett family). which,

he says, was told him by someone else.<sup>1</sup>

These were the main facts in the hands of the white news media when they began their imaginative handling of the De Mau Mau story on October 15.

The Daily News began slandering and gossiping on Monday, October 16, in the front page headline story by two white reporters. From this story every major news item has proved to be unsubstantiated rumor or a lie.

The story relates-- a black gang on the verge of carrying off murders of white police, Chicago and suburban; the gang was 300-400 strong in Chicago and 3,000-4,000 strong nationwide; the gang supposedly originated in both Viet Nam and Germany with the bombing of white officers, and it was speculated that they are involved in several other murders across the nation.

The Daily News headline proved to be a completely unsubstantiated rumor, and, according to its sister paper, the Chicago Sun-Times, "probably false". The size of the gang was also rumor (Investigators said Tuesday they doubt Chicago De Mau Mau group was part of

any national anti-white terrorist organization.") The nature of the De Mau Mau organization was also a probable lie. According to a couple of black veterans, De Mau Mau was a secret non-violent fraternity aimed at fighting racial discrimination. One veteran was interviewed by a black reporter of the otherwise white, Chicago Today staff, Barbara Reynolds, and the other by Micheal Miner of the Chicago Sun-Times. Unfortunately no black reporters nor any black people having leads into black veteran;a groups were called to check the veracity of the fantastic rumors until after the lies and rumors were front page.

Chicago Today's Monday story was also about a "murder gang. . . 3,000 strong", which had already killed "9. . . in Illinois alone" And, in an added display of overt racism accused the nine unconvicted brothers of carrying on the "Mau Mau's legacy of hate." Thus the reporter doubled his lie-mileage, turning the history of white oppression around in Africa by accusing the victims of hating over there, while he entertained his white readers at black people's expense here in Chicago.

The Tribune reporters, while exploiting the racial aspects of the killing and the possible link with the murder of Kathleen Fiene (adding to racial tensions in Gage Park), like other news gang members apparently pressed Elrod for more murders. They quoted him as saying, "It would be purely speculative. . . ." Despite the unverifiable nature of and the meaningless-ness

of pure speculation, the reporters went ahead and printed his prediction that there were more unsolved murders connected with De Mau Mau.

The Sun-Times let everyone see for themselves, the suspects are all black young men, and without bothering to find out who and how many, associated them with Malcolm X College.

Particularly the Daily News and the Chicago Today continued, throughout the week, to print lies, unfounded rumors and third and fourth-hand information, on the front page. They showed no desire to inform the public of the truth but rather to convince the public that they had a good story.

Here are examples of their incompetent reporting:

1. Sheriff Elrod was quoted as saying "We have the ringleaders, . . . We have the primary triggermen." And yet in the same story the gang is said to be nationwide numbering in the thousands. The quote of primary triggermen is revealing as to the number of people the Chicago law thinks are in the gang (if it does exist) and is contradictory to news-reporters' speculation. Why weren't reporters motivated to clear up the contradiction?

2. The Daily News linked the gang to a slaying in Oklahoma of a state trooper and a store manager and his family on the basis of a toll ticket found in the auto of one victim, Micheal Gerchenson. Yet his auto was found by the Chicago Police two weeks before the

Oklahoma murders.

3. It was noted that the auto carrying the suspects had some of the same "unusual" ammunition used in two of the murders. The Chicago Journalism Review points out that this ammunition is easily obtainable and therefore although different from domestic-made ammunition not very unusual.

4. In a manner worthy of malicious over-the-fence gossip, though this time before millions, the Daily News graphically describes the "Inside Story of (the) Slaughter in Barrington Hills". This front page story was given to reporters second-hand from un-named police sources--who got their information from an un-named informer, who later said in court that he had heard it from someone else. This improbable account was somehow worthy of being front page information for Chicagoans.

5. During the same week Chicago Today's editorial page pictured black soldiers invading the city, while the accompanying editorial ran--"Get these terrorists into custody before they kill more of us."

WHAT THE WHITE GANGS OPERATING AS PAPERS DID NOT SAY--

1. The guns which are a major piece of evidence have not been found, even though police claim a full confession.

2. The guns are linked ballistically by the Chicago Crime Lab<sup>2</sup>, the same lab which concealed information in the Fred Hampton police

raid.

3. There appears to be no evidence that would prove a conspiracy in the nine murders, nor have conspiracy charges been made by the law. In other words, while the police feel they have no case for conspiracy, the Chicago papers build their whole story around some wild conspiracy and omit this truth.

4. Edward Hanrahan was on the verge of being defeated in his bid for re-election. A competent Republican State's Attorney would be able to do a lot of cleaning house at the expense of the democrats. It is possible that the democrats were out to win a white fear vote with Hanrahan posing as their savior.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Up to this point the facts haven't been too startling, I suppose, to many people since it follows the same pattern--- whenever anything happens to black people which makes white people appear to be wrong then the paper finds two sides to the story; but when the positions are reversed, the surface treatment is all you will see, unless you look real close. Yet the papers continue to deny their bias:

I can assure you that the newspapers in this great country of ours--the Chicago Tribune among them--will continue to be honest, fair, accurate and objective in printing the news. We will continue to tell it like it is--without fear or favor.

--Harold Grumhaus, Publisher  
Chicago Tribune, Harvard Club  
November 2, 1972

The reporters we talked to denied they were racist, while admitting that their stories exploited racial fears. They were trying to sell a story. It had the ingredients to sell, murder, wealthy victims (and race). One reporter admitted that from what he knew of black G.I.'s the story, as explained by Chicago police officials, was "unbelievable".\* But evidently he believed, because he accepted it, and added to it considerably.

The story of De Mau Mau ran for a week, polluting any atmosphere in which justice would be involved for the suspects; at the same time it maligned Malcolm X College, and its students, alienated black veterans, and increased racial tensions all over the country.

We believe that we can truthfully charge the Chicago newspapers with slander, lying, racism and promoting race hatred and general fears between blacks and whites, as well as promoting fear by black people of black G.I.'s. And we point out that Chicago newspapers are prone to do this generally--that is, to promote fear, and alienation, and for black people hatred of self.

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#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Martin Weston, "What's it all about, Eddie?", Chicago Journalism Review, (December, 1972), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

\*We have withheld the names of all reporters at the request of one on the terms that our interview with him would be more open if he knew in advance that his name was not going to be in print.

DEFEND  
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